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U.S. PRESSES ISRAEL FOR TALKS WITH 2 NAMED IN SPY CASE

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 — The United States today stepped up its public pressure on Israel to permit questioning of two Israeli diplomats, and possibly other officials, in connection with the case of a United States Navy employee, Jonathan Jay Pollard, charged with selling secret documents.

A State Department spokesman, Charles Redman, expressed dismay that Israel had so far failed to abide by a pledge to allow the officials to be questioned. Mr. Redman said the two Israeli diplomats, identified in Jerusalem as Mr. Pollard's contacts, left the United States last Friday, a day after Mr. Pollard was arrested in Washington. Mr. Redman said the Israeli Government did not notify the State Department of their departure.

'We Were Not Informed'

"We have no explanation for that departure," Mr. Redman said at his regular news briefing. "We were not informed. We are dismayed that the Government of Israel was not as forthcoming as we would have hoped and expected. But the important point now, and the crucial point, is that we have prompt access to those involved."

A highly placed Israeli official in Jerusalem has said that the two diplomats would not be returned to the United States for questioning but that the Federal Bureau of Investigation might be permitted to speak to them in Israel. The two are Ilan Ravid, an aide to the science attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Yosef Yagur, the science attaché in the Israeli consulate general in New York.

Israeli officials have insisted that the mainstream Israeli intelligence agencies were not involved in the affair and that the country's political leadership was not aware of it. Rather, according to the highly placed Israeli source, an internal investigation found it to be a rogue operation run by a senior counterterrorism official, who used the two science attachés as conduits for Mr. Pollard's documents.

More Information Sought

Mr. Redman said that United States officials did not know enough yet to accept or reject that characterization.

Sources in Israel said that the two diplomats became involved because the counterterrorism official was also a high official in the science agency that appointed them. The sources said the two were apparently called home suddenly, outside normal Foreign Ministry channels. [Page 9.]

The Israeli Ambassador, Meir Rosenne, did not reply to a request for a telephone interview on the matter. The White House press office did not answer the telephone late this afternoon, and Karna Small, spokesman for the National Security Council, referred all questions on the state of Israeli-American relations to Mr. Redman of the State Department.

Although Israel's delay in presenting its officials for questioning appears to have increased the strains that the spy episode has created in Israeli-American relations, the long-term impact on the two countries' overall ties is not expected to be great, both American and Israeli officials have said.

Mr. Redman declined to provide details on the information sought from Israel, but it is believed to relate both to the pending criminal case against Mr. Pollard and to an assessment of any damage he might have done to American intelligence and military interests.

The high Israeli official in Jerusalem said the Israeli inquiry had found that Mr. Pollard worked for a special counterterrorist unit. According to the account of that investigation, he provided Israel with documents on American intelligence about Arab military forces, Soviet weaponry used in Arab lands and sensitive Israeli defense matters. The last area of information apparently convinced some Israeli officials that the United States was spying on Israel.

Mr. Redman gave a partial denial of this. "We don't comment on alleged intelligence activities," he said. "I would note that we're not aware of any U.S. officials having ever been expelled for intelligence or espionage reasons."

As to the charge that assessments of Israeli military capabilities had been obtained covertly or illegally, he said: "That's not the case. Those assessments were made in the course of our

longstanding defense relationship and intelligence exchanges with the Government of Israel."

"Our objective now is to obtain all the facts promptly so that our laws can be enforced," Mr. Redman said. "We've asked the Israeli Government specifically for their full cooperation with our law-enforcement officials in providing us with all information it has in connection with this case, including the return of any documents and access to Israeli officials involved. The Israeli authorities have assured us of their willingness to cooperate. However, they have not yet provided the full and prompt cooperation we requested a week ago. We regret this delay and are urging the Israeli Government to respond promptly."

Despite the State Department statements, the affair is not expected to affect overall relations between the two countries, Mr. Redman said.

Normal Relations Are Seen

"As difficult as this case may be," he said, "I don't think there's been any implication that the normal relationship has been in some way fundamentally interrupted."

In the past severe incidents of friction have not undermined the basic United States commitment to Israel. For example, after Israel attacked a nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981 and later annexed the Golan Heights, the Reagan Administration withheld the delivery of some weaponry and Menachem Begin, who was then Prime Minister, denounced the United States as treating Israel like "a vassal state." But the weapon deliveries were resumed and good relations restored.

Even relations among Israeli and American intelligence agencies may not be disrupted; Israeli officials have long portrayed these relations as a mixture of extensive cooperation and tension.

Israel has always wanted more information from the United States than the United States has been willing to give, including data on Arab military capacities and deployments, photographs from spy satellites and technical details on Soviet weapons. In 1979, for example, the Central Intelligence Agency noted in a report that Israel had long collected scientific intelligence in the United States and had tried to gather information on secret United States policy decisions concerning Israel.

Indications that the United States has not been quite as generous with intelligence information as it could have been have often frustrated Israeli officials.

As a high Israeli official said Thursday: "The information Pollard turned over about Soviet weapons systems was vital for us. It was the kind of information we expected to be given to us by the United States as part of our general exchange of intelligence — but the Americans weren't giving it to us."